

## Background Dossier Two

### Ben Franklin, Musician



Here are some facts about Mr. Franklin's musical life:

- At age seven, Ben spent all of his money on a penny whistle
- Played the harpsichord, harp, guitar, viola and violin.
- Invented the glass armonica, which was an improvement over the angelic organ (a series of musical glasses)
- Played his armonica in the evening with his daughter, Sally, as she played her harpsichord
- Brought his armonica to dinner parties to play for his associates and friends
- Invented the four-sided music stand which allowed four musicians to play and read their music together while looking at one another
- Composed historical ballads
- Objected to "needless" repetition in songs
- Preferred lyrics to be enunciated
- Studied music as a science, and was knowledgeable in the history, theory and harmony of music
- Had a music room on the third floor of his home, the Blue Room, where he housed his instruments: a harpsichord, a viola, a Welsh harp, and a set of tuned bells for use in tuning his harpsichord
- Loved playing and singing Scottish tunes
- Thought singing was a melodious way of talking

Franklin said, "Of all of my inventions, the glass armonica has given me the greatest personal satisfaction."